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(71) Applicant: **ALLERGAN, INC.** [US/US]; 2525 Dupont Drive, Irvine, CA 92612 (US).

(72) Inventors: **STEWARD, Lance, E.**; 9 Woodfern, Irvine, CA 92614 (US). **FERNANDEZ-SALAS, Ester**; 1710 Rocky Road, Fullerton, CA 92831 (US). **AOKI, Kei, Roger**; 22 Ginger Lily Court, Coto de Caza, CA 92679 (US).

(74) Agents: **FISHER, Carlos, A.** et al.; Allergan, Inc., 2525 Dupont Drive, Irvine, CA 92612 (US).

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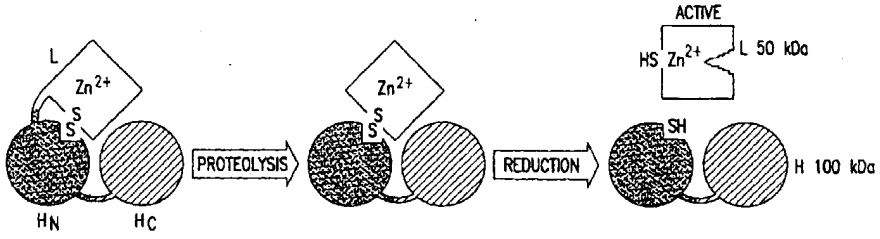

(57) Abstract: The present invention provides clostridial toxin substrates useful in assaying for the protease activity of any clostridial toxin, including botulinum toxins of all serotypes as well as tetanus toxins. A clostridial toxin substrate of the invention contains a donor fluorophore; an acceptor having an absorbance spectrum overlapping the emission spectrum of the donor fluorophore; and a clostridial toxin recognition sequence that includes a cleavage site, where the cleavage site intervenes between the donor fluorophore and the acceptor and where, under the appropriate conditions, resonance energy transfer is exhibited between the donor fluorophore and the acceptor.

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FRET PROTEASE ASSAYS FOR BOTULINUM SEROTYPE A/E TOXINS

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates generally to fluorescence resonance energy transfer and protease assays, for example, assays for protease activity of clostridial toxins such botulinum toxins and tetanus toxins, and more specifically, to intramolecularly quenched substrates and methods for assaying for clostridial toxin protease activity.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The neuroparalytic syndrome of tetanus and the rare but potentially fatal disease, botulism, are caused by neurotoxins produced by bacteria of the genus *Clostridium*. These clostridial neurotoxins are highly potent and specific poisons of neural cells, with the human lethal dose of the botulinum toxins on the order of micrograms. Thus, the presence of even minute levels of botulinum toxins in foodstuffs represents a public health hazard that must be avoided through rigorous testing.

However, in spite of their potentially deleterious effects, low controlled doses of botulinum neurotoxins have been successfully used as therapeutics. These toxins have been used in the therapeutic management of a variety of focal and segmental dystonias, of strabismus and other conditions in which a reversible depression of a cholinergic nerve terminal activity is desired. Established therapeutic uses of botulinum neurotoxins in humans include, for example,